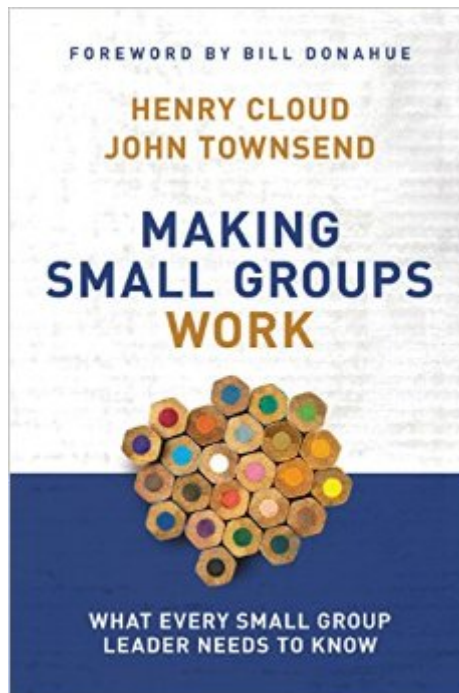


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# Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs To Know



## Synopsis

Lead small groups through astounding growth with principles from the best-selling books *How People Grow* and *Boundaries*. No matter what need brings a group of people together—from marriage enrichment to divorce recovery, from grief recovery to spiritual formation—members are part of a small group because they want to grow. This book by psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend provides small-group leaders with valuable guidance and information on how they can help their groups to grow spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. With insights from their best-selling book *How People Grow*, Cloud and Townsend show how God's plan for growth is made up of three key elements: grace plus truth plus time. When groups embrace those elements, they find God's grace and forgiveness and learn how to handle their imperfections without shame as they model God's love and support to one another. In addition to describing what makes small groups work, *Leading Small Groups That Help People Grow* explains the roles and responsibilities of both leaders and group members. Employing tenets from the book *How People Grow*, this book equips leaders to understand the ins and outs of how to promote growth, and using principles from their best-selling book *Boundaries*, they show how to identify and find solutions for common problems such as boredom, noncompliance, passivity, aggression, narcissism, spiritualization, over-neediness, over-giving, and nonstop talking.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend have written a book that every small groups leader/pastor

can benefit from reading: *Making Small Groups Work*. It's been sitting on my shelf for 2 years, and I finally read it! The book focuses on basic principles of spiritual and relational growth, group structure, discussion facilitation, and the creation of safe growth environments. Thus, the book is applicable and relevant to leaders of any small group regardless of the type or model of small groups the church has established. The book is divided into six sections, and each section consists of several short chapters: 1. How Small Groups Help People Grow 2. What Happens in a Good Group 3. Starting a Small Group 4. The Responsibilities of Group Facilitators 5. The Responsibilities of Group Members 6. How to Deal with Problems in Groups Each chapter is very practical, readable, and short. The authors make great use of bullet points and lists to narrow the focus of the topic they are targeting. Because of the arrangement of the chapters, the book also serves well as a quick reference guide. The authors include excellent examples of "role playing" and "scripts" to assist a leader in finding the right words to communicate the points they are illustrating. Their challenge to "guard the process" serves as a foundation for the entire book. I especially like the fact that they have dedicated an entire section of chapters to the responsibilities of group members. I spend a lot of time training leaders on their responsibilities, but I rarely address the expectations for group members. This is an area in which we should try to grow at National Community Church.

I bought the unabridged audiobook version of this book, hoping to utilize some significant portions of road-trip time to learn more for my leadership role with our church's small group ministry. Though not normally a Cloud/Townsend fan, I was pleased to hear them introduce the book by indicating that they would discuss two questions that all church leaders are asking: how do we find more small group leaders and how do we train them. They proceeded to spend the next eight hours completely ignoring those key questions. I only wish they would have answered them. Instead of offering strategic, visionary, thought-provoking advice for ministry leaders and small group leaders, Cloud and Townsend rambled on about how to deal with people's feelings and emotions. This type of book is exactly why I generally avoid books written by Christian counselors. I couldn't begin to count the number of times that they referred to feelings and emotions. While I know that emotional understanding is important to leading people in groups, there is so much more to it. I agree with an earlier reviewer who suggested that this book is primarily geared toward leading support groups. While important, that is only one type of legitimate group within the church. The title of this book presumes to be too broadly applicable, when their focus is very narrow. I was also annoyed by their insistence on using the word "facilitator," rather than "leader." I think that every lousy group that I've attended resulted from the mindset of the leader that they wanted to facilitate and not lead. What

groups need is passionate, committed, and competent leadership, not just facilitators.

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